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NSC BRIEFING

6 April 1954

MILITARY PICTURE IN INDOCHINA

- I. Many French emphasize military situation Indochina deteriorating.
- II. They say best reserves being chewed up at Dien Bien Phu.
 - A. We to airlift two paratroop battalions from North Africa.
 - B. Also they want large US carrier.
- III. French point to heavy infiltration Tonkin delta.
 - A. There 20,000 regulars and 55,000 auxiliaries ambushing French troops, cutting links between Hanoi and Haiphong.
 - B. These troops not yet exercised full capabilities

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- C. Nine regular battalions on Hanoi-Haiphong lines and may try isolate Hanoi.
- D. French reserves in delta reduced from 45 to 17.
- IV. Vietnam army progressing very slowly
 - A. Strength now 126 battalions; 54 of which activated last year and 66 planned for 1955.
 - B. Lacks officers and has poor spirit.
- V. Viet Minh initiative other areas keep French jumping
 - A. In central Laos, force which invaded last Christmas evading French, threatening Makong.
 - B. In Central Vietnam, enemy attacking outposts and harassing French operation "Atlante."

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C. In South Vietnam, Viet Minh hitting small posts and subverting Indo-china troops.

D. Insursion of Cambodia last week small. May be to cut Mekong River, force French dispersal and make political capital.

VI. Navarre's plan perhaps suffered temporary setback

A. Dispersal Tonkin reserves precludes offensives there.

B. In Central Vietnam, "Atlante" tying down his troops in unproductive effort. Not killing enemy.

C. Navarre's plan pacify south and north deltas not meeting success.

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VII. Viet Minh situation, however, not all favorable. Enemy also has manpower problem.

A. Can't afford heavy casualties.

B. Poor quality enemy replacements at Dien Bien Phu evident.

VIII. Viet Minh materiel inferior US-supplied French.

A. Viet Minh has initiative but not confident of taking Tonkin delta.

1. Campaigns in other areas involves only tactical targets.

IX Dien Bien Phu may be crucial.

A. French losses won't be military catastrophe but will hit morale of French troops.

1. Viet Minh prestige will be greatly enhanced. Its losses can then be easily recouped.

B. If French win, can capitalize on Viet Minh losses and mount offensives planned by Navarre.

1. He planned to keep fighting in the Tonkin during rainy season.

X At last reports Dien Bien Phu attacks by Viet Minh stopped. Both sides groggy.

A. Enemy efforts against strongpoints Huguette, Dominique and Eliane.

B. De Castries says fatigue and raw replacements weakened enemy.

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- C. But Viet Minh has 20,000 replacements en route Dien Bien Phu.

XI Viet Minh reinforcement picture.

- A. 13,000 from north and southwest of delta.
- B. Units which were operating against pro-French guerrillas in northwest Tonkin.
- C. Troops in northern Laos.
- D. Two battalions of Division 304 from delta periphery.

XII French resupply and reinforcement hampered by antiaircraft fire.

- A. Dropping from high altitudes, using delayed action parachutes to stop supplies falling to enemy.
- B. Paratroopers dropped by night total 500; but some landed in enemy territory.

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XIII High French official in Saigon says every indication Viet Minh making effort capture Dien Bien Phu regardless of cost.

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